

# MUSIC GLOSSARY

**A cappella** - without accompaniment

**Accent** - stress, emphasis, force or loudness given to a sound or tone

**Accompaniment** - piano or instrumental work of a song

**Ballad** - song that tells a story

**Band (marching and concert)** - group of instruments with no string family members

**Bass clef** - clefs indicate pitch designation; bass is the lower clef

**Beat** - pulse of sound

**Bluegrass** - style of music featuring folk instruments, quite rhythmical

**Blues** - style of music with predictable chord structure, slow in tempo, lyrics usually deal with hardships of life

**Chord** - 3 or more tones sounded simultaneously

**Chorus** - a group of singers

**Classical** - serious or formal music

**Coda** - passage added to the end of a piece of music

**Composer** - person who write music

**Composition** - work composer writes

**Concert** - public performance

**Conductor** - director of a musical group

**Duet** - two performers

**Elements**

**Dynamics** -loud/soft element of music

forte-loud

fortissimo - very loud

piano - soft

pianissimo - very soft

crescendo - increasing loudness

decrescendo - decreasing loudness

**Form** - shape or structure of music -repetition and contrast are two fundamental characteristics of form

**Harmony** - how sounds blend together

**Melody** - how the tune moves - up, down, the same

**Rhythm** - how the beat is broken down (notes and rests)

**Style** - distinctive or characteristic manner in which elements are treated

**Tempo** - how fast or slow the music is

largo - slow to very slow

moderato - moderate

allegro - very fast

presto - faster than allegro

ritardando - slowing down

accelerando - speeding up

**Timbre/tone color** - quality of sound that distinguishes one instrument from another

**Ensemble** - playing together of several players

**Expression** - effects that make music come alive (meaning and emotion)

**Flat** - lowers the pitch 1/2 step

**Folk songs** - songs handed down from generation to generation  
**Gospel** - religious style of music; free form, not in strict time  
**Grand staff** - staff that includes treble and bass staff and ledger lines between  
**Improvising** - making up the music as you play, playing without notation  
**Intervals** - distance between two different notes  
**Instrumental** - instruments only, no lyrics  
**Introduction** - beginning that prepares for main part of song  
**Jazz** - style that combines ragtime and blues, improvised  
**Key signature** - occurs at the beginning of written music and indicates which notes are to be sharp or flat  
**Major** - tonality based on major scale  
**Measure** - space between two bar lines  
**Meter (duple/triple)** - rhythmic measure of a certain number of beats  
**Minor** - tonality based on a minor scale  
**Motive or motif** - tiny passage or group of notes  
**Musical** - type of play with music  
**Natural** - note that is neither sharp nor flat  
**Notation** - writing down of music  
**Notes** - symbols of sound  
     **whole** - 4 beats  
     **half** - 2 beats  
     **quarter** - 1 beat  
     **eighth** - 1/2 beat  
     **sixteenth** 1/4 beat  
**Opera** - sung drama  
**Orchestra** - group of players including all four families or instruments  
**Ostinato** - repeated pattern  
**Pattern** - grouping of notes, either rhythmically or melodically or both  
**Phrase** - musical thought or sentence  
**Pitch** - height or depth of a note  
**Quartet** - 4 performers  
**Quintet** - 5 performers  
**Ragtime** - jumping and jagged style of music  
**Rap** - style of music that is verbal communication with rhyming lyrics  
**Refrain** - section of the music that remains the same at the end of the various verses  
**Rest** - symbol of silence  
     **whole** - 4 beats  
     **half** - 2 beats  
     **quarter** - 1 beat  
     **eighth** - 1/2 beat  
     **sixteenth** 1/4 beat  
**Rondo** - alternates with a new and changed section  
**Round** - melody that keeps coming round and round again  
**Scale** - series of notes arranged in their correct ascending and descending order  
**Sharp** - raises pitch 1/2 step  
**Soul** - popular style of African American music  
**Spirituals** - style of music with deep emotion  
**Staff** - 5 lines and 4 spaces on which music is noted

**Suite** - collection of pieces that go together

**Symphony** - composition of several movements

**Syncopation** - alteration to the normal beat

**Texture** - layers of sound

**Theme** - main musical idea

**Time signature** - occurs at the beginning of written music to indicate groupings of beats

**Treble clef** - clefs indicate pitch designation; treble is for the higher pitches

**Trio** - 3 performers

**Unison** - sing or play the same note simultaneously

Verse - section of a song that changes after each refrain

**Voice**

**Soprano** - highest pitch of human voice

**Alto** - lowest female voice

**Tenor** - highest male voice

**Bass** lowest pitch of human voice